

Message Text

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FM AMEMBASSY BONN

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AMEMBASSY BERLIN

USMISSION USBERLIN

AMCONSUL BREMEN

AMCONSUL DUSSELDORF

AMCONSUL FRANKFURT

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USIAC

E.O. 11652:N/A

SUBJECT: CLIMATE OF OPINION ASSESSMENT

REF: USIA 10667 C

SUMMARY: FOLLOWING THE FALL OF SOUTH VIETNAM AND CAMBODIA FRG PUBLIC AND MEDIA UNDERTOOK SOME SOBER SOUL-SEARCHING ON THE IMPLICATIONS FOR AMERICAN-GERMAN AND AMERICAN-EUROPEAN RELATIONS. AS RAISED IN DISCUSSIONS WITH OFFICIAL AMERICANS AND POSED IN THE MOST INFLUENTIAL TV PUBLIC AFFAIRS PROGRAMS AND PRINT MEDIA COMMENTARIES AND ANALYSES, THE MAIN QUESTION WAS TWO-FOLD: HAS AMERICAN POWER SERIOUSLY DECLINED AND CAN WE (THE FRG) RELY ON THE U.S. IN THE FUTURE? THE EXAMINATIONS WERE FAR-REACHING AND ALTERNATIVES VIGOROUSLY EXPLORED. SOME EXTREME POINTS OF VIEW WERE ELICITED.

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WHEN THE DEBATE SUBSIDED MOST WIDELY EXPRESSED CON-

CLUSIONS WERE: (1) AMERICA'S WITHDRAWAL FROM INDO-CHINA, WHILE CONSTITUTING A PSYCHOLOGICAL BLOW AND A WEAKENING OF ITS POSITION IN SOUTHEAST ASIA, HAD NOT SERIOUSLY Affected ITS CAPABILITY, INFLUENCE OR COMMITMENT IN EUROPE. IT MAY EVEN HAVE IMPROVED ALL THREE BECAUSE US RESOURCES ARE NO LONGER BEING DRAINED; AND (2) THE US WOULD COME TO EUROPE'S AID IF A CRISIS AROSE. THE MOST SERIOUS DOUBTS CAME FROM CONSERVATIVES WHO HAD SUPPORTED US INVOLVEMENT IN VIETNAM AND REGISTERED A GREATER PSYCHOLOGICAL IMPACT THAN THOSE LEFT OF CENTER.

AVAILABLE POLLS IN APRIL SHOWED CONFLICTING RESULTS BUT ALL INDICATED THAT THE US WAS BY FAR THE MOST IMPORTANT FRG ALLY AND ONE OF THE MOST HIGHLY RESPECTED PUBLIC OPINION SURVEYS GAVE THE US A HIGHER STANDING THAN AT ANY TIME IN THE PAST SIX YEARS.

FRG GOVERNMENT OFFICIALS EXPRESSED VIEWS THAT (1) THE US COULD NOW TURN MORE ATTENTION TO EUROPE; (2) THAT WITHDRAWAL FROM VIETNAM WAS LESS WORRISOME FOR THEM THAN THE STATE OF THE US ECONOMY; (3) THAT THE SOVIET UNION SEEMED NOT TO HAVE TAKEN PARTICULAR ADVANTAGE OF THE US WITHDRAWAL FROM SOUTHEAST ASIA; (4) THAT FRG/US VIEWS REMAINED ESSENTIALLY PARALLEL ON CSCE, MBFR AND IN IDENTIFYING BERLIN AS "THE TOUCHSTONE OF DETENTE;" AND (5) THAT WHILE THERE WERE SERIOUS PROBLEMS FACING OUR SOCIETY, THE FRG LEADERSHIP FELT NO SLACKENING OF CONFIDENCE IN THE US.

DESPITE THE GENERALLY POSITIVE CONCLUSIONS REACHED IN BOTH THE PUBLIC AND PRIVATE SECTORS IN THIS COUNTRY, THESE VIEWS ARE STILL RELATIVELY FRAGILE AND COULD BE QUICKLY UNDERMINED IF THE GERMANS PERCEIVED, EITHER IN FACT OR THROUGH MISINTERPRETATION, ANY LESSENING OF COMMITMENT BY THE US. THE VISIBILITY OF THE AMERICAN PRESENCE, INCLUDING ITS CULTURAL AND INFORMATIONAL ELEMENTS, IS ESPECIALLY IMPORTANT AT THE PRESENT TIME. THE SUBSTANCE OF USIS OUTPUT SHOULD EMPHASIZE THE ENDURING NATURE OF OUR COMMITMENT, GIVE CLOSE ATTENTION

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TO THE US RECOVERY FROM RECESSION, AND REFLECT THE STRENGTH OF AMERICAN INSTITUTIONS IN TIMES OF CRISIS. WHILE THE GERMAN GOVERNMENT AND OPPOSITION HAVE NOT WAIVERED IN THEIR SUPPORT, THE PUBLIC AND ESPECIALLY THE MEDIA HAVE BEEN ALERT TO SIGNS OF WEAKNESS IN THE US AND IT WILL TAKE TIME BEFORE GERMAN PUBLIC SENTIMENT IS FULLY REASSURED. END SUMMARY.

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1. IN JUNE 1975 THE CLEAR IMPRESSION THE EMBASSY AND
USIS HAVE IS THAT THE IMAGE IN WEST GERMANY OF THE US
AS A SOCIETY AND WORLD POWER HAS STEADILY IMPROVED SINCE
THE AFTERMATH OF SPRING EVENTS IN SOUTHEAST ASIA. WHILE
THE FALL OF SOUTH VIETNAM AND CAMBODIA INITIALLY
PROVOKED CONSIDERABLE SOUL-SEARCHING AMONG THE GERMAN
MEDIA AND PUBLIC IN GENERAL, THE IMAGE OF THE US HAS
REGAINED CONSIDERABLE GROUND IN RECENT WEEKS. WE BASE
THIS PERCEPTION ON MEDIA COMMENT, PUBLIC OPINION POLLS
AND CONVERSATIONS WITH WEST GERMAN OFFICIALS AND
OPINION-MAKERS, MANY OF WHOM IN RECENT WEEKS HAVE TAKEN
A NEW LOOK AT AND DRAWN A NEW ASSESSMENT OF THE US IN
THE "POST-VIETNAM" ERA. THE IMPROVEMENT IS PARTICULARLY
DISCERNIBLE WHEN CONTRASTED WITH THE FLOW OF CRITICAL

COMMENT DURING THE WEEKS LEADING UP TO AND IMMEDIATELY
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FOLLOWING THE US WITHDRAWAL FROM VIETNAM.

2. AMONG THE QUESTIONS BEING ASKED:

A. IS THE UNITED STATES EXPERIENCING A "TURNING INWARD" THAT COULD ULTIMATELY RESULT IN A "TURNING AWAY" FROM WESTERN EUROPE?

B. CAN WORDS OF ASSURANCE FROM A WEAKENED AMERICAN EXECUTIVE BE CONSTRUED AS BINDING IN LONG-RANGE TERMS?

C. WOULD THE EXPRESSED US COMMITMENT TO NATO AND WEST GERMANY, ESPECIALLY WEST BERLIN, BE TRANSLATED INTO MEANINGFUL ACTION IN THE EVENT OF A PALPABLE THREAT FROM THE SOVIET UNION?

D. MIGHT CONTINUED US EFFORTS TOWARD DETENTE LEAD TO AN EROSION OF AMERICAN INTEREST IN WESTERN EUROPE?

E. WILL AMERICA'S ECONOMIC DILEMMAS HAVE A DEBILITATING EFFECT ON ITS CAPACITY TO ACT DECISIVELY IN ITS ROLE AS LEADER IN THE WESTERN ALLIANCE?

THIS LAST QUESTION, ALTHOUGH IT HAS NOT BEEN DISCUSSED WITH THE SAME EMOTIONAL PITCH AS THE ISSUE OF AMERICAN CREDIBILITY IN THE WAKE OF VIETNAM, IS PERHAPS ULTIMATELY OF GREATER IMPORTANCE IN ASSESSING THE US IMAGE IN THIS COUNTRY. WEST GERMAN LEADERS ARE KNOWN TO BE MUCH MORE CONCERNED ABOUT ECONOMIC PROBLEMS FACING BOTH OF OUR COUNTRIES, WITH SPECIFIC CONCERN DIRECTED TOWARD THE IMPACT OF AMERICAN ECONOMIC PROBLEMS ON THE FEDERAL REPUBLIC. THE QUESTIONS THEY ARE ASKING ARE FREQUENTLY FOCUSED ON THE FAILURE OF THE US TO END ITS RECESSION.

3. THE DEBATE OVER US DEPENDABILITY FOLLOWING THE VIETNAM ENGAGEMENT HAS FOR THE MOST PART BEEN A SOBER ONE, LACKING HYSTERICAL OVERTONES AND DEVOID OF ACRIMONY, ALTHOUGH IT HAS OCCASIONALLY GENERATED EXTREME POINTS OF VIEW. DURING THIS PERIOD, WE HAVE
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DETECTED A GENERAL PUBLIC UNEASINESS ABOUT US-EUROPEAN RELATIONS, AND NOTED THAT DEVELOPMENTS IN INDOCHINA HAD FED A LATENT SENSE OF INSECURITY IN WEST GERMANY. THIS UNEASINESS WAS NATURALLY REFLECTED IN THE MEDIA, WITH A NUMBER OF COMMENTATORS OPENLY QUESTIONING THE VALUE OF AMERICAN PLEDGES OF SUPPORT, PARTICULARLY AS THEY APPLIED TO WEST BERLIN. ON MAY 15 THE SECOND GERMAN TV (ZDF) PRESENTED A SPECIAL PROGRAM ENTITLED "ARE THE AMERICANS LEAVING US IN THE LURCH?" PARTICIPATING WERE FIVE TV CORRESPONDENTS, AND AT THE CONCLUSION OF THE PROGRAM EACH OF THEM WAS ASKED WHETHER THE US WOULD IN FACT ABANDON WEST GERMANY IN AN EMERGENCY. THEIR RESPONSES: LOTHAR RUEHL (BRUSSELS): "NOT WITHIN THE NEXT FEW YEARS. I WOULD SAY WE HAVE BREATHING SPACE FOR 10 TO 15 YEARS." GERHARD DAMBMANN (TOKYO): "I AM CONVINCED THAT THEY WILL NOT LEAVE US IN THE LURCH BECAUSE (THE DEFENSE OF EUROPE) IS JUST AS MUCH IN THEIR INTEREST AS IN OURS." CARL WEISS (WASHINGTON): "WITH A LITTLE BIT OF LUCK, AND IF WE OURSELVES MAKE AN EFFORT TO HELP THEM, I WOULD SAY NO." HANS SCHEICHER (SINGAPORE): "I DO NOT BELIEVE IT EITHER, BUT THE PROCESS OF FORMING AN OPINION IN AMERICA ALWAYS TAKES A WHILE.IN A FEW YEARS THE AMERICANS WILL BRING THEMSELVES TO SEEING THINGS WITH SOMEWHAT GREATER CLARITY." PETER SCHOLL-LATOUR (FAR EAST): "LIKE LOTHAR RUEHL, I SET A LIMIT OF 10 YEARS, WITH THE EXCEPTION OF BERLIN WHICH EVEN TODAY IS NO LONGER SECURE."

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4. EDITORIALISTS ALSO ADDRESSED THEMSELVES TO THIS QUESTION AND THEIR VIEWS FREQUENTLY REFLECTED DISCONTENTMENT WITH THE UNITED STATES. THE CONSERVATIVE DIE WELT COMMENTED TOWARD THE END OF APRIL THAT COUNTRIES DEPENDING ON AMERICAN SUPPORT "WILL HAVE TO ASK THEMSELVES IF THEY CAN AFFORD TO HAVE AN ENEMY AGAINST WHOM ONLY THE US CAN PROTECT THEM." IN A SIMILAR VEIN, THE WEEKLY NEWS MAGAZINE DER SPIEGEL, LEFT OF CENTER, IN A COVER STORY ENTITLED "NO MORE COUNTING ON AMERICA?", CONCLUDED THAT THE US HAD INDEED LOST A DEGREE OF CREDIBILITY AS A RESULT OF ITS INVOLVEMENT IN VIETNAM, AND THAT WORDS OF REASSURANCE TO OTHER ALLIES AROUND THE WORLD MIGHT FOR THE TIME BEING HAVE A RATHER HOLLOW RING. FRITZ VON GLOBIG, WRITING IN THE MAY 2 STUTTGARTER ZEITUNG (INDEPENDENT), DISCUSSED "THE

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DIMENSIONS OF AMERICAN POLICY ERRORS," CONCLUDING THAT "IT SEEMS INCOMPREHENSIBLE THAT THE UNITED STATES, ALMOST BLINDLY, GOT INTO THIS ADVENTURE." SOME VIEWS WERE SHARP, OFTEN CARPING AND QUERULOUS, INDICATING THAT THE IMAGE OF THE US HAD SLIPPED MEASURABLY.

5. IT IS NOTEWORTHY THAT CONSERVATIVE ELEMENTS OF GERMANY'S POLITICAL LEADERSHIP TOOK THE US DEPARTURE FROM VIETNAM MUCH MORE SERIOUSLY AND WITH GREATER OUT-SPOKEN CONCERN THAN DID SUPPORTERS OF THE PRESENT GOVERNMENT. THE BONN EMBASSY RECEIVED A NUMBER OF LETTERS FROM CDU AND CSU SUPPORTERS EXPRESSING CONCERN AND DISAPPOINTMENT OVER THE US WITHDRAWAL, WITH SEVERAL OF THEM QUESTIONING AMERICAN RELIABILITY AND EXPRESSING OPEN INDIGNATION. THESE WERE INDIVIDUAL VOICES, HOWEVER, AND THE EMBASSY HAS NOT REGISTERED THIS REACTION FROM THE CDU/CSU LEADERSHIP. INDEED, THE FOREIGN POLICY SPOKESMAN OF THE CDU, WALTHER LEISLER KIEP, TOLD A RADIO INTERVIEWER IN LATE APRIL THAT HE

FOUND IT "ALMOST PARADOXICAL TO DOUBT THE LOYALTY OF THE UNITED STATES ON THE OCCASION OF THE FINAL ACT OF THE VIETNAM TRAGEDY." HE SAID: "THERE EXISTS NO THIRD WAY FOR THE UNITED STATES WITHOUT EUROPE, AND NO THIRD WAY FOR EUROPE WITHOUT THE UNITED STATES. WE MUST STRESS THAT NOW AND GIVE THE AMERICAN ALLY A SMALL SIGN OF SOLIDARITY AND SYMPATHY IN THE DIFFICULT TIMES AMERICA IS NOW FACING." ANOTHER PROMINENT CDU POLITICIAN, KURT BIRRENBACH, WHO IS ALSO THE PRESIDENT OF THE GERMAN SOCIETY FOR FOREIGN POLICY, SAID IN EARLY JUNE ON RETURN FROM A VISIT TO THE US IT WAS CLEAR THAT "SAIGON IS NOT BERLIN." HE SAID, "THE TIES BETWEEN THE UNITED STATES AND SOUTH VIETNAM ARE NOT TO BE COMPARED WITH THE NATO ALLIANCE."

6. AMERICAN RELIABILITY WAS NEVER PUBLICLY QUESTIONED BY THE SCHMIDT GOVERNMENT AND DURING THE NATO SUMMIT MEETING IN BRUSSELS MAY 30 CHANCELLOR SCHMIDT, ADDRESSING PRESIDENT FORD, ARTICULATED THE STRONGEST STATEMENT OF SUPPORT FOR THE AMERICAN POSITION AND CREDENCE IN AMERICAN PLEDGES TO ABIDE BY ITS COMMITMENTS IN EUROPE. "I WISH TO ASSURE YOU FOR OUR PART,"
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THE CHANCELLOR SAID, "PARTICULARLY AT A TIME IN WHICH AMERICA'S WORLD-WIDE RESPONSIBILITIES ARE ESPECIALLY HEAVY TO BEAR, THAT YOU HAVE OUR SUPPORT: YOU CAN DEPEND EQUALY ON US." SCHMIDT SAID THAT "THE CORE OF THE ALLIANCE, AMERICAN-EUROPEAN SOLIDARITY, IS INTACT," AND THAT "WE MUST CONTINUE TO EXPAND CLOSE COOPERATION WITH THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA, FOR OUR SECURITY IS GUARANTEED BY THE ALLIANCE WITH THE UNITED STATES."

7. A NUMBER OF OTHER WEST GERMAN OFFICIALS SOUGHT TO REDUCE UNEASINESS IN THE COUNTRY. DEFENSE MINISTER GEORG LEBER, WHO IS ASSOCIATED WITH THE CONSERVATIVE WING OF THE SOCIAL DEMOCRATIC PARTY, HAS CONSISTENTLY BEEN THE MOST VOCAL MEMBER OF THE GOVERNMENT IN DEFENDING THE US AND ITS ROLE IN EUROPE. "EVEN AFTER COMPLETION OF WEST EUROPEAN POLITICAL UNIFICATION," LEBER SAID JUNE 4, "I CANNOT CONCEIVE OF AN ADEQUATE MILITARY BALANCE IN EUROPE WITHOUT CONTINUED PARTERSHIP WITH THE UNITED STATES." HE ADDED: "IF EUROPE WANTS TO FEEL SECURE, THE UNITED STATES CANNOT BE REPLACED BY ANYONE AS A BALANCING ELEMENT."

8. CONCERN WITHIN THE SPD WAS VOICED BY THE MAYOR OF HAMBURG, HANS-ULRICH KLOSE (38), DURING A CONVERSATION WITH THE AMERICAN CONSUL GENERAL IN THAT CITY. HE SAID THAT EVENTS IN INDOCHINA HAD SERIOUSLY DISQUIETED

MANY INFLUENTIAL MEMBERS OF THE PARTY, AND HE WONDERED,

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BECAUSE OF CERTAIN FEARS HE HAD HEARD EXPRESSED IN
PARTY CIRCLES, ABOUT THE POSSIBILITY OF A GROWING
DISENCHANTMENT ON THE PART OF THE AMERICAN PEOPLE WITH
THE COUNTRY'S FOREIGN ALLIANCES AND WHETHER THIS IN TURN
MIGHT LEAD TO NEO-ISOLATIONISM. THE MAYOR FELT THAT
THE UNITED STATES, DISILLUSIONED BY DIPLOMATIC AND
MILITARY SETBACKS, MIGHT BE TEMPTED TO LICK ITS WOUNDS
AT HOME WHILE ALLOWING ITS FRIENDS AND ALLIES TO FEND
FOR THEMSELVES IN EUROPE OR IN THE MIDDLE EAST.

9. THE ROLE OF GERMAN MEDIA IN THIS DEBATE HAS BEEN
MOST IMPORTANT IN SHAPING OPINION, AND IN RECENT WEEKS
THERE HAS BEEN A NOTABLE INCREASE IN THE NUMBER OF

EDITORIALS, COMMENTARIES, ETC., EXPRESSING CONFIDENCE
IN US RELIABILITY AS AN ALLY. THESE EXPRESSIONS BECAME
MORE PRONOUNCED FOLLOWING THE US ACTION IN THE
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MAYAGUEZ AFFAIR, AND THEY GAINED IN PROMINENCE AND
FORCEFULNESS FOLLOWING THE VISIT OF SECRETARY KISSINGER
TO BONN AND BERLIN (MAY 20-21) AND PRESIDENT FORD'S
TRIP TO EUROPE AT THE END OF MAY AND BEGINNING OF JUNE.
A COMMENTARY BROADCAST BY HESSE RADIO JUNE 4 IS SIGNI-
FICANT IN THIS REGARD, SINCE THIS STATION, FURTHER
LEFT OF CENTER THAN MOST, IS FREQUENTLY AMONG THE FIRST
TO CRITICIZE THE US. THE COMMENTATOR, ROCHLAGE-GERDES,
SAID: "FORD SUCCEEDED IN AGAIN INSTILLING BELIEF IN
AMERICA, IN ITS FAITHFUL ADHERENCE TO TREATIES AND
COMMITMENTS AND IN ITS CAPABILITY TO USE POWER...THE
LESSON OF SOUTHEAST ASIA, THAT ONE MAY ALSO LOSE AT
AMERICA'S SIDE, IS OF NO BEARING IN EUROPE. FORD'S
BEARING AND LANGUAGE, EVEN THE WAY IN WHICH HE PASSED
OVER LIGHTLY EUROPE'S NEGLIGENT HANDLING OF DEFENSE
POLICY, REMOVED ANY DOUBT THAT AMERICA MIGHT INTERPRET
ITSELF OUT OF TREATIES AND COMMITMENTS IN THE
ATLANTIC AREA." SIMILARLY, THE SECOND GERMAN TV (ZDF)
PRESENTED A COMMENTARY JUNE 4 BY WASHINGTON
CORRESPONDENT GERD HELBIG WHICH APPLAUDED THE
PRESIDENT'S APPROACH TO EUROPE: "AFTER THE DIFFICULT
POST-WATERGATE AND POST-VIETNAM PERIOD HE (FORD) WAS
ABLE TO LAY THE GROUNDWORK FOR A NEW BASIS OF CONFIDENCE
AND WAS ABLE TO DISPEL FEARS THAT THE AMERICANS WERE
RESORTING TO ISOLATIONISM."

10. A SAMPLING OF OTHER COMMENT IN CONNECTION WITH
THE FORD VISIT: "PRESIDENT FORD MADE PERFECTLY CLEAR
THAT THE WESTERN SUPERPOWER IS FULLY PRESENT ON THE
INTERNATIONAL SCENE AND THAT HIS COUNTRY WILL LIVE UP
TO ITS COMMITMENTS AS THE LEADING WESTERN POWER"
(RHEINISCHER MERKUR, PRO-CDU WEEKLY, JUNE 5); "THERE IS
A PROSPECT OF FORD'S GRADUALLY OBTAINING MORE SUPPORT IN
THE CONGRESS AND THE NATION FOR PLAYING A LEADING ROLE
ON THE INTERNATIONAL SCENE. HIS ADDRESS IN BRUSSELS,
THE MOST IMPORTANT DOCUMENT OF THE (NATO) MEETING,
POINTS IN THIS DIRECTION. IT SHOWS THAT THE EMPHASIS
OF US FOREIGN POLICY IS SHIFTING BACK TO THE ATLANTIC
OCEAN AND THAT AMERICA IS AWARE OF ITS CLOSEST ALLIES
IN EUROPE" (FRANKFURTER ALLGEMEINE ZEITUNG, INDEPENDENT,
JUNE 2); "THE WAY IN WHICH FORD REAFFIRMED US LOYALTY
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HAS IMPRESSED THE EUROPEANS" (STUTTGARTER ZEITUNG, INDEPENDENT, JUNE 2); "PRESIDENT FORD MAY LOOK BACK UPON A DECIDEDLY SUCCESSFUL TOUR TO EUROPE... SOME GOVERNMENT HEADS ACCEPTED UNWILLINGLY THE AMERICAN CALL FOR A SUMMIT, BUT THEY QUICKLY REALIZED THAT NOTHING NOW HAS MORE PRIORITY THAN THE STRENGTHENING OF THE AMERICAN PRESIDENT WHO IS DETERMINED TO ACT" (SOUTHWEST GERMAN RADIO II, JUNE 4).

11. THERE WAS A DISTINCT PAUCITY OF NEGATIVE COMMENT IN CONNECTION WITH FORD'S VISIT AND WE GAINED THE IMPRESSION THAT AMERICA'S IMAGE IN WEST GERMANY HAD INDEED IMPROVED AS A RESULT OF THIS NEW ATTENTION TO EUROPE. THE ONLY MAJOR NATIONAL PUBLICATION TO TAKE A CRITICAL, EVEN CARPING, VIEW OF THE VISIT WAS DER SPIEGEL, WHICH FREQUENTLY TAKES AN ANTI-AMERICAN POSTURE ON FOREIGN POLICY MATTERS. UNDER THE HEADLINE "AN ABSOLUTELY IMPOSSIBLE VISIT," THE MAGAZINE SAID THAT "GERALD FORD PLAYED FOREIGN POLITICIAN FOR ONE WEEK IN BRUSSELS, MADRID, SALZBURG AND ROME--WITHOUT GREAT SUCCESS." THE ARTICLE SAID: "IT MADE NO DIFFERENCE WHAT FORD, THE FOREIGN POLICY NOVICE, TOUCHED, EVEN UNDER HIS HANDS IT WAS NOT ABOUT TO YIELD BETTER RESULTS THAN WAS RECENTLY THE CASE WITH THE UNHAPPY KISSINGER." THERE WAS, INCIDENTALLY, NOTHING IN THE ARTICLE TO SUBSTANTIATE THE HEADLINE, ALTHOUGH

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THE NEW YORK TIMES WAS CITED AS HAVING CALLED THE SPAIN
STOP "AN ABSOLUTELY UNNECESSARY VISIT."

12. THE MEDIA IN WEST GERMANY IN RECENT WEEKS HAVE
THUS CLEARLY PRESENTED A MORE POSITIVE IMAGE OF THE
US THAN THEY HAD IN APRIL. IT IS DIFFICULT TO DETERMINE
HOW SUBSTANTIAL THIS TREND IS, BUT IT IS CLEARLY
RELATED TO THE NEW ATTENTION WASHINGTON IS DIRECTING
TOWARD EUROPE, SPECIFICALLY THE VISITS BY THE PRESIDENT
AND SECRETARY OF STATE.

13. WE ALSO PERCEIVE A DISTINCT SENSE OF RELIEF AMONG
MANY GERMANS WITH WHOM WE COME INTO CONTACT, ESPECIALLY
YOUNGER GERMANS, SINCE THE END OF THE VIETNAM INVOLVE-
MENT. WE ALSO NOTE THAT POLITICALLY ACTIVE STUDENTS,
MANY OF WHOM WOULD NOT HAVE ENTERED AN AMERICA HOUSE A
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FEW YEARS AGO, ARE NOW BEGINNING TO ATTEND PROGRAMS.
THE YOUNG SOCIALISTS, MUCH FURTHER LEFT THAN THEIR
ELDERS, SENT A HIGH-LEVEL DELEGATION TO USNATO EARLIER
THIS YEAR UNDER USIS SPONSORSHIP. THERE HAVE ALSO BEEN
INSTANCES IN RECENT MONTHS IN WHICH PLACEMENT OF SPEAKERS,
EVEN IF CLEARLY SPONSORED BY THE USG, HAS BEEN EASIER AT
HIGHLY POLITICIZED UNIVERSITIES. ON THE OTHER HAND WE
HAVE HEARD COMMENTS FROM AT LEAST ONE HIGHLY KNOWLEDGE-
ABLE POLITICAL SCIENTIST THAT THE MOST SERIOUS GERMAN
STUDENTS QUESTION AMERICAN STAYING POWER. THEY DO NOT
DOUBT THE AMERICAN COMMITMENT TO EUROPE TODAY BUT WONDER
WHETHER, IN THE LIGHT OF VIETNAM, THE AMERICAN PUBLIC
AND CONGRESS WILL CONTINUE TO SUPPORT THIS COMMITMENT AS
STRONGLY IN THE FUTURE IN THE ABSENCE OF AN OBVIOUS
MILITARY THREAT.

14. A RECENT PUBLIC OPINION POLL INDICATES THAT THE US
STANDS SUBSTANTIALLY HIGHER IN THE EYES OF WEST GERMANS

TODAY THAN AT ANY TIME DURING THE PAST SIX YEARS. THIS LATEST SAMPLING BY THE EMNID INSTITUTE, TAKEN IN APRIL, SHOWS THE HIGHEST PERCENTAGE OF APPROVAL (82 PERCENT) SINCE DECEMBER 1969 AMONG THOSE FAVORING "FRG EFFORTS TOWARD BETTER RELATIONS WITH THE UNITED STATES." THE FIGURE REPRESENTS A GAIN OF 5 PERCENT SINCE JANUARY. A SIMILAR POLL TAKEN IN MARCH BY THE WICKERT INSTITUTE (OFTEN CONSIDERED THE LEAST RELIABLE OF THE PUBLIC OPINION POLLS) SHOWED A DROP IN AMERICAN STANDING AMONG WEST GERMANS, ALTHOUGH THE FIGURES INDICATED THAT THE US REMAINED CONSIDERABLY MORE IMPORTANT FOR THE FRG THAN OTHER NATIONS. THE QUESTION PRESENTED IN THE POLL WAS: "WITH WHICH GREAT POWER IS FRIENDSHIP MOST IMPORTANT FOR THE FEDERAL REPUBLIC?" FORTY-NINE PERCENT NAMED THE US, 14 PERCENT FRANCE, 13 PERCENT ENGLAND AND 6 PERCENT THE SOVIET UNION. IN ANSWER TO THE SAME QUESTION IN MARCH 1973, 62 PERCENT HAD NAMED THE US, 13 PERCENT FRANCE, 10 PERCENT ENGLAND AND 6 PERCENT THE SOVIET UNION.

15. THE FRG GOVERNMENT VIEW OF DETENTE CONTINUES TO BE IDENTICAL WITH THAT STATED BY SECRETARY KISSINGER IN BERLIN ON MAY 21, NAMELY THAT BERLIN REMAINS "THE TOUCH-STONE OF DETENTE." THERE IS A CERTAIN AMOUNT OF WORRY
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ENDEMIC TO FRG POLITICAL FIGURES OVER POSSIBLE AMERICAN-SOVIET BILATERALISM, BUT THEIR PERCEPTIONS ARE ESSENTIALLY THE SAME AS THOSE OF THE US AND THEIR INTERESTS IN CSCE AND MBFR ARE VIRTUALLY PARALLEL TO OURS. BOTH THE GOVERNMENT AND THE OPPOSITION PARTIES FEAR UNDUE RELAXATION OF DEFENSE POSTURES IN THE WEST

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INFO SECSTATE WASHDC 0763
AMEMBASSY BERLIN
USMISSION USBERLIN
AMCONSUL BREMEN
AMCONSUL DUSSELDORF
AMCONSUL FRANKFURT
AMCONSUL HAMBURG
AMCONSUL MUNICH
AMCONSUL STUTTGART

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AND LEADERS OF ALL PARTIES HAVE REPEATEDLY EMPHASIZED THE NEED FOR A STRONG NATO WITH A CONTINUING US PRESENCE IN EUROPE AND IN THE FRG SPECIFICALLY. THE NATO COMMUNIQUE ISSUED FOLLOWING THE MAY SUMMIT PRECISELY REFLECTS THE FRG VIEW IN THIS REGARD.

16. WHILE IT IS APPARENT, IN SUM, THAT THE US IMAGE HAS IMPROVED IN RECENT WEEKS, THE IMPROVEMENT MUST BE REGARDED AS BEING RATHER FRAGILE AND IT MAY BE SUBJECT TO REVERSAL IF THERE IS ANY INDICATION OF A REDUCTION IN THE US COMMITMENT TO EUROPE AND SPECIFICALLY TO THE FRG. FOR THIS REASON THE VISIBILITY OF THE US PRESENCE, INCLUDING ITS CULTURAL AND INFORMATIONAL ELEMENTS, IS PARTICULARLY IMPORTANT AT THE PRESENT TIME.

17. AS FOR PRIORITIES IN AGENCY OUTPUT WE BELIEVE
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STRONG EMPHASIS SHOULD CONTINUE TO BE GIVEN TO DISSEMINATION OF STATEMENTS BY INFLUENTIAL AMERICANS, ESPECIALLY INCLUDING MEMBERS OF THE CONGRESS, THAT THE US CONSIDERS ITS ALLIANCE IN EUROPE TO BE OF PRIME IMPORTANCE. HOWEVER, SINCE FRG OFFICIALS AND THE PUBLIC ARE HIGHLY CONCERNED THESE DAYS WITH THE STATE OF THEIR ECONOMY AND THERE IS BROAD AGREEMENT THAT THE ECONOMIC SITUATION IN THE US IS OF CRITICAL IMPORTANCE IN SOLVING GERMANY'S OWN PROBLEMS, WE WOULD RATE MATERIAL ON THE US RECOVERY FROM RECESSION A CLOSE SECOND TO THE ALLIANCE THEME. FINALLY WHILE WE WOULD URGE PRIORITY

ATTENTION ON THE FOREGOING ISSUES, IT IS CLEAR THAT
GERMANS WILL ALSO BE CLOSELY WATCHING OUR SUCCESS OR
FAILURE IN COMING TO TERMS WITH INTERNAL STRESSES
WITHIN OUR OWN SOCIETY. THIS, TOGETHER WITH THE
INTEREST GENERATED BY THE BICENTENNIAL, WILL REQUIRE A
MORE ANALYTICAL THAN DESCRIPTIVE APPROACH IN TREATING
DOMESTIC ISSUES, WITH PARTICULAR EMPHASIS ON THE
DURABILITY OF OUR INSTITUTIONS IN THE FACE OF INTERNAL
AND EXTERNAL CRISES.

RUSSELL

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